24 March 1974

Dear Harold:

Over the weekend everyone appears to have been preoccupied with the story leaked to the LA Times on the tape of the Nixon-Dean conversation about hush money. In case the Post has undergone one of its fits of bashfulness, I attach the Chronicle's version (2 stories on the 23rd) of the LA Times yarn, along with some interesting followup in the Examiner on the 24th, today.

From the first word of this, on a radiocast late the night of the 22nd, we felt this probably was mainly a White House leak, designed to solicit sympathy for the poor abused noble creature on whom everybody is ganging up, and to add fuel to the fire designed to stampede the House Judiciary Committee into acting prematurely. Since then there has been no reason for us to change our mind, and the Ken Clawson blast in the Examiner pretty much nails it down, we think. Typical WH overkill, and Clawson goes too far in a technical respect, we suspect, when he says the committee alrady has that tape. As we understand it, this was among the material Sirica ordered turned over, then stayed for appeal purposes, where the appellate court set Monday, March 25 for the turnover unless the appeal went to the Supreme Court, which it hasn't as of now.

Turning to another matter, we also suspected right off that the attempted kidnaping of Princess Anne in London on March 20 might have some relationship to earlier kidnapings. On the 21st, the first day the news was carried here in newspapers, we heard an early radio newscast which said a large amount of money had recently been deposited in the bank account of the suspect, Ian Ball. Nothing more was heard of this, so presumably it was found to be without substance or has been dropped deliberately. Now, in papers today, Sunday, the 24th, we get a report that the Times has received a letter saying the kidnaping is claimed by an outfit calling itself the Marxist-Leninist Activist Revolutionary Movement, which no one has heard of before and which Scotland Yard dismisses by describing the kidnaping (or possibly the letter) as "a typical attempt by a fringe group to gain publicity." (by London police),

In any case, the MLARM, being previously unheard of, appears to resemble the SLA, the ARA and possibly other obscure groups who either claim credit for or are blamed for these outrages. Ball's behavior, described by witnesses as like that of a madman, appears to resemble that of such individuals as Bremer, possibly Williams in Atlanta, Sirhan, the soldier who landed the chopper on the WH Lawn, and Mr. Byck who allegedly planned to crash a hijacked plane into the WH.

A strong circumstantial case can be made for one kidnaping leading to another merely by suggestion and imitation. But it doesn't dispose of other possibilities which may exist. I'd assign these other possiblities to two different but not necessarily mutually exclusive areas. One would be a build-up by elements interested in the biggest kidnaping or hijacking of all, for whatever purpose, which could be simple disposal of the central individual or possibly to use him for the purposes of the elements concerned. The other also would be a build-up, by elements around the central individual, and again the purpose could be one of several possibilities, the main one being to create an entirely new situation all round. You might think about it.

Best, Jim jdw